

Christianity Explained

Part One

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INTRODUCTION

God loves you and has a purpose for your life. God created you with special gifts, talents and abilities that equip you to fulfill His purpose. You are on this earth for a reason. Purpose is the original intent in the mind of the creator that motivated him to create a particular item. In this booklet it refers especially to the reason that God created you. God created you with a definite purpose in mind. In a general sense, your purpose is to glorify God and to serve people. This booklet explains how you can do that.

Myles Munroe says, "The greatest tragedy in life is not death, but life without a reason." It is terrible to be alive and not know why. It is important that you do things right. It is even more important that you do the right things.

Kevin W. McCarthy gives a great illustration. He suggests that you imagine you're in a boat on a river. He goes on to explain that people react as floaters, fighters or navigators. The floaters passively resign themselves to accept the river in its present condition. They aimlessly go along for the ride. The fighters fight the forces of nature. These high achievers accomplish a lot but experience burnout, stress, depression and other difficulties as they try to control the "river." Nearly everyone is a "floater" or a "fighter" by nature. What we need to do is train ourselves to become "navigators." The navigator knows the river and realizes that he or she can't change it. But he can harness the resources that he has to go where he wants to go. Therefore, whether you are a floater or a fighter by nature, learn to become a navigator by discovering your God-ordained purpose and dedicate your life to its fulfillment. God's purpose for you includes three "phases." God's purpose for you is that you be (1) saved, (2) sanctified and (3) serving. Phases one and two are the same for every person. Phase three is unique and different for each person. In chapter one we will study how to be saved and have an eternal, everlasting, God-quality life. In chapter two we will study some of the ways you can be sanctified. What we mean by sanctified is that you are growing in your spiritual life; you are becoming more and more like Christ. In chapter three we will attempt to show you how you can discover your place of service in God's kingdom.

CHAPTER ONE

Have you ever heard of the four spiritual laws? It is a simple way to explain biblical Christianity. Let's examine what the Bible says about eternal salvation under four main points.

All Have Sinned

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This passage says that all sin. That includes you, me and everybody we know. Some are better than others, but all sin to some degree. The word sin means to miss the mark. I define sin as the misuse of something good. The Bible defines sin three ways. In the book of I John, chapter 3 verse 4 says that "sin is lawlessness." Sin is to do wrong. James 4:17 says "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." This is the sin of omission. Romans 14:23 says "whatever is not from faith is sin." That is a little more difficult to understand. What it means is that if I think something is a sin, then whether it really is a sin or not, if I do it while thinking it is a sin, then for me it is a sin. All persons of accountable age sin.

The Result of Sin is Separation From God

Because all of us sin, we have a tendency to think that sin is not all that bad. We can always find someone who sins more than we do. In fact, many times we can find a church leader--deacon, elder or preacher--who has sinned "worse" than we have. But that does not change how our own sin affects us. The Bible says in Romans 6:23a, "For the wages of sin is death." Wages is what we get for what we do. If I have a job making \$10 per hour and I work 40 hours, then my wages are \$400. Wages are what we get for what we do. The wages of sin is death. What we get for our sin is death.

The Bible defines death two ways. Death always means separation. There is a physical death and there is a spiritual death. James 2:26 says, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead..." When our spirit leaves our body, we are dead physically. There is also a second death, which is spiritual. Revelation 20:14 says, "This is the second death, the lake of fire." II Thessalonians 1:9 explains this second death by saying, "And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Therefore, just as physical death is the separation of my spirit from my body, spiritual death (the second death) is the separation of my spirit from God. To die spiritually means I will spend eternity in hell, away from God. So far we have seen that all of us sin and that the result of our sin is separation from God. At this point in the process things look pretty bad.

God Loves Us and Sent Jesus To Die For Us

Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Even though we sin and should be separated from God for all eternity, He loves us and desires to save us from that awful fate. God

wants us to spend eternity with Him. He wants us to share His life. Notice the phrase ‘Christ died for us.’ It is very important that you understand what that means.

The prophet Isaiah explained it in Isaiah 53:6. That verse says, “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” In other words, all of us have sinned. We have gone our own way instead of God’s way. If we remain on that path, we will be separated from God forever. But God caused the sin (iniquity) of us all to be punished on Jesus. It is very, very important that you understand this point.

To help you get the point, I’m going to ask you to do something for me. Get a book and place it on the palm of your open right hand. Now pretend that book is a record of your life. It contains all the good things you have done and all the bad things you have done. Let’s consider the bad things. Those sins--what you did wrong and what you should have done that you did not do and even the things you thought were wrong and you did them anyway--are in that book on your opened right hand. Now pretend that your right hand is you. Those sins in that book are what separates you from God. Even if you add a lot of good things, the sins are still there and they still separate you from God. The wages of sin is death. Now pretend your opened left hand is Jesus. Jesus died for you. When he died for you he took your sins upon Himself. Transfer the book from your open right hand (you) to the palm of your open left hand (Jesus). How does that leave you? With no sins. Therefore, you have the right of access to God. II Corinthians 5:21 says, ‘He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf...’ Jesus, who had never sinned, took our sins upon Himself. Christ died for you! Make sure that you understand this point before you read further.

**In Order To Be Saved
You Must Accept Jesus
As Your Lord and Savior**

You are a sinner. The wages of your sin is death, which is eternal separation from God. But God loves you and wants you to spend eternity with Him. Therefore God sent His only Son Jesus to die for you. He died for you and offers to you the free gift of eternal life. Let’s go back and read the entire verse of Romans 6:23. It says, ‘For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ Eternal life is sharing God’s life with Him. It is being saved. It is being a Christian. It is spending eternity with God. Note that eternal life is a free gift. It is not something we earn or deserve. It is a free gift. But it is a gift only to those who are ‘in Christ Jesus.’ So the question now becomes, how do I get into a right relationship with Jesus Christ?

Faith John 1:12 says, ‘But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.’ Those who believe in Jesus become sons (children) of God. John 3:16 says, ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ In the Bible ‘believe’ and ‘faith’ are the same thing. It means to trust in, to rely upon, or to depend upon. To believe in Jesus means to believe the story

presented above and to trust in His death to pay for our sins. It means to rely upon Him and Him alone to take away your sins. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and that He died for your sins? Are you trusting Him alone for your salvation?

Repentance Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "I tell you, no, but except you repent, you will all likewise perish." The word repentance means to turn around. To repent means that you stop living for yourself and start living for Jesus. You stop being in control of your life and allow Him to control your life. It is as if you get out of the driver's seat, go around, get in the passenger side and allow Jesus to drive your life. Are you willing to turn the control of your life over to Jesus?

Confession of Jesus Jesus said in Matthew 10:32, "Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven." You must be willing to make a public confession of your faith in Jesus. You cannot be a "closet Christian." You need to publicly state that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Are you willing to do that?

Baptism Acts 2:38 says, "And Peter said to them, Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." In the church world, baptism has become a controversial subject. But Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17). Jesus commanded us to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Bible baptism is immersion in water of a repentant believer in Jesus. Baptism demonstrates that you are trusting in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for your salvation. You symbolize His death, burial and resurrection when you are immersed (baptized). Are you willing to be baptized into Jesus Christ?

Christian Living Once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior you must continue to allow Him to lead your life. You are trusting Him to take you to heaven and you are trusting Him to tell you how to live your life here on earth. Acts 2:42 summarizes the life of the first Christians when it says, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." In other words, Christians devote themselves to four activities.

Those four activities are:

The apostles' teaching, which for us is the study of and obedience to the Bible, especially the New Testament

Fellowship, which is sharing your life with other Christians and includes, but is not limited to, church attendance.

Breaking of bread, which is the Lord's Supper or the communion. It is best to partake of communion at least once a week.

Prayer, which is talking to God.

In this chapter we have learned the following:

The four spiritual laws

All Have Sinned

The Wages of Sin Is Death

God Loves You and Jesus Died For You

You Must Receive Jesus As Your Personal Lord and Savior

How to receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior

Faith in Jesus

Repentance

Confession of your faith

Baptism into Christ

Christian Living

How to continue in your faith after accepting Jesus as your Savior

Bible Study

Fellowship With Other Christians

Partake of the Lord's Supper Regularly

Prayer

If you need to make a decision in your life concerning your relationship with God through Jesus Christ, do it now.